

PUBLIC

AI Index: MDE 24/029/2006

31 March 2006

Further Information on UA 41/06 (MDE 24/019/2006, 17 February 2006) and follow-up (MDE 24/020/2006, 21 February 2006, MDE 24/023/2006, 7 March 2006) - Fear of torture/incommunicado detention/prisoners of conscience

SYRIA 'Ali Nizar 'Ali, (m), aged 21, student
Husam 'Ali Mulhim, (m), aged 21, student
Tarek Ghorani, (m), student
Maher Ibrahim (m), also known as Maher Isbir, aged around 25, shop owner
Ayham Saqr (m), aged around 30, works in a beauty salon
'Alam Fakhour (m), aged around 26

**New names: 'Omar 'Ali al-'Abdullah (m), aged around 21, student
Diab Sirieyeh (m), aged around 26, part-time student**

A further two young men, 'Omar 'Ali al-'Abdullah and Diab Sirieyeh, were arrested on 18 March 2006 by Air Force Intelligence officers in al-Asad, a suburb of the capital, Damascus. Since then, they have been held in incommunicado detention at the Air Force Intelligence Branch in the town of Harasta, near Damascus, and are at risk of torture or ill-treatment. The arrests appear to be connected to their pro-democracy activities. Reportedly, all eight men have been involved in developing a political youth movement and writing political articles for various websites.

'Omar 'Ali al-'Abdullah and Diab Sirieyeh had been arrested on 14 February and held for several hours before being released. After their release, they were required to present themselves twice daily at the Air Force Intelligence Branch, in Harasta. When they presented themselves on 18 March, they were arrested. When they did not return home, their families asked the Air Force Intelligence Branch about their whereabouts and were told they had been detained. Reportedly, all eight men may be referred to court, although there is no information about which court and what charges they face.

Ali Nizar 'Ali and Husam 'Ali Mulhim were arrested on 26 January, and Tarek Ghorani was arrested on 20 February. Maher Ibrahim, Ayham Saqr and 'Alam Fakhour were arrested on 23 February. Amnesty International understands that all eight men are being held incommunicado without access to a lawyer or family members. Amnesty International also believes all eight men to be prisoners of conscience, detained solely for the peaceful exercise of their right to freedom of expression and association.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

There has been a recent increase in the targeting of individuals, including human rights defenders, perceived to be in opposition to the Syrian government when exercising the right to freedom of expression. On 23 March 2006, 'Omar 'Ali al-'Abdullah's father and brother, 'Ali al-'Abdullah and Muhammad 'Ali al-'Abdullah, were arrested after they intervened outside the Supreme State Security Court (SSSC) when Syrian security forces harassed families waiting for their relatives to be brought to hearings (see UA 73/06, MDE 24/028/2006). 'Ali al-'Abdullah and Muhammad 'Ali al-'Abdullah were detained for over five months and three weeks respectively during 2005 as prisoners of conscience (see UA 139/05, MDE 24/032/2005 and UA 203/05, MDE 24/056/2005).

RECOMMENDED ACTION: Please send appeals to arrive as quickly as possible, in Arabic, English, French or your own language:

- expressing concern at the recent arrests of 'Omar 'Ali al-'Abdullah and Diab Sirieyeh on 18 March, apparently in connection with their participation in peaceful pro-democracy activities;

- expressing concern at the continuing detention of 'Ali Nizar 'Ali, Husam 'Ali Mulhim, Tarek Ghorani, Maher Ibrahim, Ayham Saqr and 'Alam Fakhour;
- calling for the immediate and unconditional release of all eight men, as they are prisoners of conscience held solely for the peaceful expression of their opinions;
- seeking assurances that each of the eight young men will be well-treated, and not tortured or ill-treated, while they are in custody;
- reminding the authorities that the eight men have the right to immediate and unrestricted access to their families and lawyers, and any medical treatment they may need.

APPEALS TO:

His Excellency Bashar al-Assad
President
Presidential Palace
al-Rashid Street
Damascus
Syrian Arab Republic

Fax: + 963 11 332 3410

Salutation: Your Excellency

His Excellency General Hassan Ali Turkmani
Minister of Defence
Ministry of Defence
Omayyad Square
Damascus
Syrian Arab Republic

Fax: +963 11 223 7842

Salutation: Your Excellency

His Excellency Walid Mu'allim
Minister of Foreign Affairs
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
al-Rashid Street
Damascus
Syrian Arab Republic

Fax: + 963 11 3327620

Salutation: Your Excellency

COPIES TO: diplomatic representatives of Syria accredited to your country.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS IMMEDIATELY. Check with the International Secretariat, or your section office, if sending appeals after 11 May 2006.